



MIMOSA TREE

ALBIZIA JULIBRISSIN

Mimosa tree, also known as Silk tree, is native to the Asia and was first introduced into the United States during the 18th century, in 1745. Since then, it has been planted extensively as a small ornamental landscape tree, becoming especially popular for its bright pink, showy, fragrant flowers and delicate, attractive, fern-like foliage.

In addition to its contribution to landscape beauty, Mimosa tree flowers and bark have been found to be valuable in medicinal healing and have been used for cancer treatment, insomnia remedies and reduction of pain and swelling associated with trauma. The common sore throat can also be alleviated by Mimosa tree, and its mood-boosting properties have also helped to treat anxiety and depression.

Mimosa tree often establishes quickly in open, disturbed areas and can adapt to both moist and dry sites. This species prefers courser-textured soils over finer types and can grow

in various topographic settings, ranging from extremely flat areas to regions with 10-to 90-degree slopes; however, Mimosa does not fare well in climates with extremely cold temperatures, especially those associated with higher elevations above 3,000 feet. Mimosa is noted in the forest communities of oak-hickory, pine, mixed pine-hardwood, and riparian and has also been found to establish in grasslands, demonstrating high adaptability and versatility in its ecological associations.

Identification

Mimosa tree is a small-to-medium sized deciduous tree or shrub with multiple trunks and a spreading crown and an average height of 10 to 30 feet. It has bi-pinnately (twice) compound leaves, each leaf composed of 6-30 leaflets, rendering a delicate appearance, reminiscent of ferns. It is a very attractive tree with extremely showy, fragrant pink flowers, displaying numerous stamens that give each flower a



Mimosa trees have showy, fragrant pink flowers. (Photo by Lesley Ingram, Bugwood.org)



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pink powderpuff appearance. The bark of mature trees is light brown and smooth while young stems are lime green in color that later turn light brown and develop numerous lenticels. Lenticels are surface pores needed for atmospheric gas exchange. Mimosa is a member of the legume family, Fabaceae, and produces slender, 6-inch seed pods, each containing five to 10 ovular half-inch seeds.

How it spreads

Mimosa quickly succeeds in open, disturbed areas, reproducing by vegetative sprouts and by seed. Studies have revealed that this species produces very large amounts of seed, a common characteristic of invasive-exotic plants. Each individual tree is capable of producing as much as 8,000 seeds per year, and trees begin producing seed at an early age. Seeds are typically dispersed in close proximity to the parent plant; however,

they can also be dispersed by wind and have the ability to travel up to 300 feet. Seeds can also be easily transported by water, and wildlife species that forage on seed also contribute to its movement. Successful germination of Mimosa seed requires seed scarification, a process that delays germination time and can allow seed to lie dormant in the soil for many years.

Management

To help prevent the spread, do not plant Mimosa tree. Instead, select native alternatives, such as Red Buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*), Serviceberry (*Amelanchier arborea*), Carolina Silverbell (*Halesia carolina*), Eastern Redbud (*Cercis Canadensis*), Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*) or Southern Sugar Maple (*Acer floridanum* or *A. barbatum*).

Mature trees can be controlled by cutting trees at ground level followed by herbicide treatment of stumps to eliminate and/or reduce sprouting. After initial treatment, sprouts can be removed with hand pruners or loppers followed by repeated herbicide application. Mimosa seedlings are easily controlled by hand-pulling, however, entire plants must be removed or residual roots in the soil will likely regenerate new trees.

Contact information

If you would like more information on Mimosa tree, contact David Jenkins at the SC Forestry Commission at djenkins@scfc.gov or contact the Clemson Invasive Species Program at <https://www.clemson.edu/public/regulatory/plant-protection/invasive/>.

For information on how you can combat invasive plants in your community visit the South Carolina Exotic Pest Plant website at <https://www.sc-eppc.org/southcarolina/> or send an email to southcarolinaeppc@gmail.com.



Mimosa trees produce slender, 6-inch seed pods. (Photo by Chuck Barger, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org)